

***Timandra comae* (Schmidt) (Lep: Geometridae) – the first record for VC 91, Kincardineshire and its status as a probable immigrant in Scotland**

A single example of the Blood-vein *Timandra comae* (Schmidt) was netted near a Skinner-type, 125 watt mercury-vapour trap on a coastal cliff top path near Muchalls at grid reference NO 902916 on 4 September 2004 by Steve Hunt. This represents the first record of the species for VC 91, Kincardineshire, and only the second ever record for north-east Scotland (Robert M. Palmer pers. comm.). The specimen has been retained by the county recorder, RMP.

The only previous record in north east Scotland was from VC 92: *Timandra amataria* (Donovan) *nec* (Linn.) near Burnharvie *sic* (now Burnhervie) (Reid, W. 1893, List of the Lepidoptera of Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire. **British Naturalist** 1891-1893). This article was a reprint of a list, apparently privately published, so the exact date of the record is not known.

It is therefore unlikely that *T. comae* is resident in the north east of Scotland and more probably it is a rare immigrant. The weather conditions prior to the evening of 4 September 2004 appeared suitable for migration. September began with a mild south westerly airflow with very warm, humid air reaching Scotland on 4th.

Other immigrant Lepidoptera recorded on the night included *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufn.) and *Autographa gamma* (L.). The southern subspecies *Celaena leucostigma leucostigma* (Hb.) was also probably a migrant as this species is represented in the north of Scotland by *C. leucostigma scotica* Cockayne. *Discestra trifolii* (Hufn.) is also considered to be an immigrant in the north of Scotland (Waring P. 2003. *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland*), although its current status is uncertain. During 2004, *D. trifolii* was recorded from several sites in the north east (RMP, pers. comm.) so may have become at least temporarily established in the area as it did in Orkney in the 1970s (Waring P. 2003. *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland*).

All available published records were examined to assess the status of *T. comae* in Scotland: these are summarised in Table 1.

When the Berwickshire records were summarised in a later paper it was remarked that these were the only two records for the county and so far the first brood had not been recorded (Long, A.G. 1967, The Macro-lepidoptera of Berwickshire. *Hist. Ber. Nat. Club*, xxxvii: 157). The distribution of records is typical of an immigrant in Scotland, i.e., coastal and scattered, with a concentration in the south, Shetland and Orkney.

In the nine published Scottish records where dates are given at least to month, no first brood individuals are present. Furthermore, the records coincide with the dates of the second brood of the English populations. If *T. comae* was a rare breeding species in Scotland with a univoltine life cycle its flight period would be predicted to be in between the two broods of the imago in England. This is the phenology of all other species that are bivoltine in the south and univoltine in the north. Suitable conditions for the immigration of this species to Scotland would appear to be more likely to coincide with the flight period of second brood individuals in England.

There are many years with no records and some years with multiple records in quick succession. This can be seen in Table 1 — two records from Orkney in August 1969 and four records (on consecutive nights) from Shetland during 1996. It is not known if the Eswick records could be of the same individual returning to the trap on consecutive nights, or if this was ruled out by retaining specimens. Even if the Shetland records relate to only two individuals at two sites, the pattern of records could indicate scarce migration events.

Table 1. Known published records of *Timandra comae* in Scotland

No.	Date	Location	VC	Recorder	Reference
?	circa 1893	Burnhervie	S. Aberdeen	W. Reid	<i>British Naturalist</i> 1891-1893.
1	circa 1900	Linwood	Renfrew	W.S.	Fauna, Flora & Geology of the Clyde Area 1901.
?	circa 1900	Arran	Clyde Isles	J.J.W.	Fauna, Flora & Geology of the Clyde Area 1901.
1	26/08/1960	Birgham	Berwick	G.A. Elliot	<i>His. Ber. Nat. Club xxxv</i> : 188-189.
1	12/08/1961	Gavinton	Berwick	A.G. Long	<i>His. Ber. Nat. Club xxxv</i> : 328-329 .
1	08/1969	Quoyberstane	Orkney	R.I.Lorimer	<i>Ent. Gaz.</i> 21 : 73-101.
1	08/1969	Kirkwall	Orkney	R.I.Lorimer	<i>Ent. Gaz.</i> 21 : 73-101.
1	11/08/1996	Ocraquoy	Shetland	G. Petrie	<i>Ent. Rec.</i> 109 : 265-279.
1	12/08/1996	Eswick	Shetland	?	<i>Ent. Rec.</i> 109 : 265-279.
1	13/08/1996	Eswick	Shetland	?	<i>Ent. Rec.</i> 109 : 265-279.
1	14/08/1996	Eswick	Shetland	?	<i>Ent. Rec.</i> 109 : 265-279.
1	04/09/2004	Muchalls	Kincardine	S. Hunt, J.Waddell	<i>Ent. Rec.</i> 117 .

The above Shetland records were preceded by a low pressure centred off the west coast of Ireland on 9 and 10 August 1996 (*Weather*. Royal Meteorological Society, 1996). This produced a southerly airflow over Shetland and could have resulted in a small influx of *T. comae*.

It should also be noted that a similar species from Scandinavia *Timandra griseata* (Petersen) could also possibly occur as an immigrant to Scotland. This possibility was investigated by submitting clear digital photographs of the Kincardineshire specimen to Dr. Lauri Kaila (Finnish Museum of Natural History, University of Helsinki) who confirmed the identity as *T. comae*. Nevertheless, any *Timandra* sp. caught in the north-east of Scotland (including Orkney and Shetland) during periods suitable for continental migration should be critically examined to determine the species. If specimens exist to support the above-mentioned Orkney records they

should be critically examined as two recorded in Orkney on 8 August 1969 coincided with other immigrant moths of suspected Scandinavian origin (Waring P. 2003. *op. cit.*).

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Hazards of butterfly collecting. 'Fossil on a pin' – Keele University, UK, 1993

In 1993 I was asked to give a paper on butterfly conservation needs in Africa as part of 25th anniversary symposium organized by the British Butterfly Conservation Society (BCS) at Keele University. This was a lively and interesting affair. Some of the most impressive presentations were those of the several studies on the reasons for the decline of butterflies in the UK. Many have been drastically reduced in both numbers and distribution over the past 50 years. The proceedings were published in an attractive book (Pullin, A. S. (ed). 1995. *Ecology and Conservation of Butterflies*. Chapman & Hall, UK).

The contrast between how much is known about so many of the few species of butterflies occurring in the United Kingdom and how little is known about most of the 4,000 species occurring in Africa could not have been more apparent. This also leads to some very different attitudes to the study and collecting of butterflies.

In the discussion following my talk, where I had emphasized habitat conservation as the over-riding issue in Africa, a member of the audience asked me about the collecting of butterflies – a potentially fraught topic amongst a large company of the august membership of Butterfly Conservation. I quoted a letter I had just received from a couple who had recently been to Yemen, one of my old haunts, and part of the Afrotropical Region: “We also saw a nymphalid that is not illustrated in any of your Arabian books and papers. We therefore knew it must be very rare and obviously we did not catch it.” “When I get a letter like that”, I said – beginning to make the motions of throttling someone with my bare hands – “I feel very, very frustrated”. I was not very sure how this would go down, but as the audience gradually caught on to what my hands were illustrating, a gratifying murmur of laughter slowly rippled through the auditorium: “How are we going to think about butterfly conservation when we do not even know what we have got?” Here was an important opportunity missed through a thoroughly confused attitude to conservation. No harm could possibly be done by taking a few butterflies out of a place which had not seen a butterfly net since I was there in the 1980s. The benefit of a complete picture of Yemen's fauna for future conservation efforts is evident.